

"It's looking quite glorbtraub out today, isn't it?" Jared the intern stated, clearly pleased with his superior ability to make small talk.

An uncomfortable shiver traveled down the spine of Bob McMann, Senior Executive Manager of InterTech's Quality Assurance division. He had been staring out his office window for some time now. He could've sworn that the statue in the courtyard was facing the other direction yesterday. Parts of the city skyline were completely unfamiliar, as if entire companies had launched and collapsed overnight. Something wasn't quite right.

"Glorbtraub?" Bob inquired, faking a smile, "I'm not quite sure what that word means."

"Ahh, Bob, you're a real joker." the intern gushed "Y'know, Oxford University just released a report not too long ago. Apparently glorbtraub is one of the top three most commonly-used words in our language."

"Really? What were the other leading two words?"

"Well..." the intern thought for a moment, "I think the other big two were fairwiggle, and groffsnawk, but I can't be..."

"That's enough," Bob barked "quit screwing with my head."

"Screwing?" the intern arched an eyebrow, "I'm not sure what that word means; I'll have to look it up in the dictionary on my wazoo."

Bob couldn't help but feel old. He was already shaky on the meaning of glorbtraub; now he had no idea what a wazoo might be. Was it a phone? Did people even use those things anymore? The youth-lingo just seemed to get weirder with every passing day, and a cultural disconnect between generations was only growing wider. He snapped back to reality.

"Why are you even here, Jared?"

"It's Jaren," the intern replied coolly, "I'm here to hand-deliver a memo, something from the higher-ups. For your eyes only."

"Well, that's all very well, Jaren-not-Jared," Bob smiled, snatching the memo out of Jaren's limp grasp, "but it's almost time for my lunch break. I'll read it when I get back."

The familiar tone of the lunch bell sounded over the intercom system. Bob listened as each tone rang out. BONG! One...BONG! Two...BONG! Three...BONG! Four...

Four? In Bob's entire time working here, the bell had always been three tones. He sighed; maybe he was losing it. Feeling defeated and hungry, he threw the memo onto his desk and made his way downstairs.

InterTech's cafeteria had long been notorious for being crowded and noisy, but it also had a reputation for serving some of the best exotic dishes money could buy. Steel-framed counters lined the room, loaded with exotic food options. A collage of silver etchings adorned the concrete walls, showcasing InterTech's historic technical achievements. It was they that invented the mighty bulldozer well over a century ago, it was they that developed the most popular desktop computer for businesses, and it was they that had engineered the Apollo rockets that had helped put man on the moon.

A particular dish caught Bob's eye. Sitting inside a tray of ice sat a group of what appeared to be a bunch of footballs. After adjusting his glasses and looking closer, he realized that each ball resembled the largest shrimp he had ever seen. They stared back at him with beady, dead eyes hanging on the ends of long stalks. Above the tray read "Kenyan Wood Louse".

"Thinking of getting one of those, eh, McMann?" a co-worker behind him teased, "They're only the most expensive delicacy here. Truly glorbtraub, indeed!"

Bob shrugged. He was already having a strange enough day; he might as well just eat a large African bug while he was at it.

"Don't forget the dipping sauce, old boy!"

He grabbed a saucer off of the rack, and poured a dark, oily substance onto it. There was no turning back now. Bob McMann was going to eat a gigantic bug like an adult. With a feeling of adventure and determination, he grabbed a seat at an empty table near the center of the room.

Deep down, he could only hope that this thing didn't taste terrible. For all he knew, maybe this thing tasted better than anything he had ever had. With his right hand poised, he thrust his fork into the center of the dish. It was now or never.

Just as soon as it was now, it was never. A deafening explosion flipped his chair over, causing him to hit his head against the marble floor. Bob looked down at his shirt and realized he was covered with what appeared to be jet black ink. His new suit was all but ruined! As he slowly assessed what had just happened, a medley of laughter came ringing back into his ears.

"Hey everybody! Looks like McMann forgot to tap on the top of his Wood Louse before cutting it!"

Even though he still didn't fully understand what was going on, he knew for sure that this was the most embarrassment he had felt in a long, long time. Feeling all the shame from the worst days of his childhood, Bob McMann stormed off to his office to fetch a change of clothes. He wasn't even hungry anymore.

After a speedy cleanup, the memo on his desk caught his eye. Bob had all but forgotten about it in his rush to get down to the cafeteria. He fumbled for it, and prepared himself. What could the higher-ups possibly want from someone working in Quality Assurance? After 22 years of working QA, was management finally promoting him? InterTech was a hard food chain to climb...

A shiver traveled down his spine again. Perhaps he wasn't getting promoted after all. He had always been a dependable worker, but he certainly wasn't the superstar caliber any of the other divisions were looking for. He thought of his brief stint working in the Engineering division, and grimaced.